

LEWISTON TRIBUNE

Former UI dean trades administration job at Auburn for research spot

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AUBURN, Ala. -- After five months on administrative leave, the former agricultural college dean of the University of Idaho has resigned as dean of Auburn University's College of Agriculture and will join the faculty as a tenured professor at \$110,000 a year, an AU spokesman said.

University officials kept secret the details that led to Michael Weiss being placed on leave in March following his hiring in August from the University of Idaho. Weiss had worked at the Moscow school less than nine months before announcing his resignation due to health reasons, then later accepted the Auburn job.

Weiss has declined to comment. His attorney, Julian McPhillips of Montgomery, said Friday that some differences with the Auburn administration over policy and procedures were involved, but he declined to elaborate.

At the UI, Weiss was accused of discriminating against a disabled employee, Michelle Hiseley, who sued him and the university in 2003. Hiseley's suit, scheduled for trial in August, claims Weiss denied her medical leave and failed to accommodate her disabilities, including an irritable bowel syndrome and a seasonal disorder in which lack of light affects mood and sleep. She also said he yelled and cursed at her.

Idaho-based attorneys for Weiss said he was "fully and completely absolved" by the Idaho Human Rights Commission, which found that Hiseley's request to work from home posed an "undue hardship" on her employer.

At Auburn, Weiss had said ongoing eye problems caused painful headaches and left him incapable of carrying out his duties as dean of the Alabama school.

McPhillips said Weiss was granted tenure when he was hired.

A settlement of the case came Thursday during a rare faculty dismissal hearing.

Witnesses were called by both sides during the closed session, but the hearing ended after only one person testified, McPhillips said.

AU spokesman David Granger said AU Provost John Heilman accepted Weiss' resignation as dean, and Weiss will become a research professor at a salary of \$110,000 per year -- a 37 percent pay cut for Weiss.

"I think Dr. Weiss is satisfied," McPhillips said.

If firing had been recommended, Weiss could have appealed to Auburn trustees for a final decision.

Weiss has declined interviews since the Opelika-Auburn News first reported on his absence from the college in March. The newspaper reported Friday on the resignation that ended the dismissal hearing.